

Brooks County Rural Transit Plan



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brooks County is approaching its 150 year anniversary. The citizens of the past did much to try to leave it a better place than they found it. The area was predominantly covered in longleaf pines that were cut and the land was put into cultivation. Agriculture and forestry gave way to manufacturing. More than half of the citizens of Brooks County now leave the county for work. This puts an economic, social, and environmental burden of the community. Brooks County had a Cost of Community Services study done for them and need to heed the warning of not becoming a bedroom community to Valdosta. Making the upcoming Comprehensive Plan an integral part of all future planning is vital to the health of the county. There is a high rate of poverty and more students need success in school. The 5311 program offers a needed method for many people without other means to have transportation to meet medical needs and other needs.

Brooks County has some difficult challenges to face such as; a decreasing employment base in the county, increasing commuting population, rising poverty and associated problems, and a struggling education system. However, it also has natural assets that cannot be replicated at any price. The history, the beautiful buildings, the longleaf pine ecosystems, rolling hills, creeks, and the fabulous dirt roads all hold allure. The horse market and ag-based and eco-based tourism are rapidly growing enterprises on which Brooks County is uniquely poised to capitalize.

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INTRODUCTION TO SECTION 5311 PROGRAMS

To assist the Georgia Department of Transportation's Office of Intermodal Programs in providing rural public transit planning, Brooks County in cooperation with the South Georgia Regional Development Center developed the Brooks County Transit Development Plan. This plan is meant to assist Brooks County with its future planning needs.

The Minimum Requirements developed by the GDOT's Office of Intermodal Programs requires that the South Georgia Regional Develops a Transit Development Plan that includes:

1. An Executive Summary
2. An Overview and Demographic Analysis of the Region
3. Development of Goals and Objectives for Transit
4. Performance Evaluation and Existing Transit Service
5. Demand Estimation and Needs Assessment
6. Transit Alternatives and Recommendations including a Five-Year Capital and Operating Plan

The Brooks County Transit Development Plan was developed along with the update for the local joint comprehensive plan for Brooks County and the municipalities of Quitman, Barwick, Morven and Pavo. The Greater Brooks County 2030 Comprehensive Plan was prepared for these communities by the South Georgia Regional Development Center. In public meetings and steering committee meetings for the Greater Brooks County 2030 Comprehensive Plan, discussion was generated on numerous transportation topics including rural transit. The meetings were utilized by staff to gather qualitative data on the performance and need for a rural transit system.

Data, recommendations and strategies from the Brooks County Transit Development Plan will also be included in the South Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan. The South Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan will be an update of the Regional Transit Development Plan of 1990 and will be designed as a more usable document for transit planning implementation.

Brooks County utilizes Section 5311 funding to help fund its rural transit system although it is not "participating" in the program. The Section 5311 Program offers local areas an opportunity to provide transit services improving access to business, commercial and activity centers. The program is administered by the Federal Transit Administration to provide assistance for rural public transportation. Federal funds are allocated to the states on a formula basis, and can be used for capital assistance, operating assistance planning, and program administration. The Georgia Department of Transportation is responsible for administering the program. GDOT is the recipient of these funds, and it in turn provides Federal funding (and a limited amount of state capital funding) to local subrecipients in Georgia.

The State of Georgia has established the following statewide goals for the Section 5311 program:

- **Goal: Basic Mobility to Serve All Georgians:**

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- serving those persons with the most critical needs for access and mobility, especially those without alternatives.
- providing service without any trip purpose restrictions or eligibility requirements including medical, social services, personal shopping, business, and employment trips.
- serving all areas with appropriate levels of service, subject to the required local or regional participation.
- addressing economic development—through employment trips, services to support local employment sites, new ones, etc.
- **Goal: Program Implementation:**
 - partnering with the FTA in the administration of the Section 5311 program, meeting all FTA program requirements.
 - managing a program of excellence that provides timely management direction, guidance, and reimbursement to allow local entities to provide quality service.
 - partnering with local or regional entities to plan services to meet locally identified needs.
 - partnering with local or regional entities to operate the services.
 - providing technical assistance to help local providers improve effectiveness, efficiency, safety, and quality of service.
 - providing technical information, policy analyses, and program management data to support transit program development.
- **Goal: Efficiency and Effectiveness:**
 - while maximizing ridership, recognizing that there are significant differences in population density, trip characteristics, and client needs (accessibility, assistance, etc.) which will affect usage.
 - subject to performance requirements appropriate to the area and type of service
 - with the appropriate type of service—demand-responsive, subscription route, route deviation, or fixed-route.
 - using the appropriate vehicle type—accessible if needed, sedan, van, small bus, large bus.
- **Goal: Safe, Secure Quality Service:**
 - operating equipment that is within its design life, inspected for safety and overall condition
 - operated by staff meeting the highest qualifications—appropriate license (Commercial Drivers License (CDL) if required), safe driving and criminal records checked, drug and alcohol tested, etc.
 - operated by a staff that is trained to proficiency in all necessary skills:
 - Defensive Driving
 - Passenger Assistance
 - First Aid and CPR
 - providing a safe and secure service to the riders.
- **Goal: Accessible Service—Usable by Persons with Disabilities:**

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- providing service that is accessible (adequate number of accessible lift- or ramp-equipped vehicles).
 - using operators trained to proficiency in passenger assistance, lift use, restraints, mobility devices (folding, stowage, etc.).
 - user information and outreach to ensure that persons needing the service are aware of it and can obtain information.
- **Goal: Coordinated Provision of Transportation in Rural Areas:**
 - coordinated policies at the state level through interagency coordination.
 - coordinated at regional/local level—shared vehicles, shared ride, coordinated management—where it will result in more cost-effective, quality service that meets client and general public transit rider needs.

The rural transit system in Brooks County shares these goals as well. Likewise, GDOT has established minimum criteria for transit programs in GDOT's Rural Public Transportation Service Policy. These include:

- Services should not be duplicative of other transportation services;
- Vehicles should be utilized to reach a goal of 500 one-way passenger trips per vehicle month **or** be operated 120 hours per month **or** 1,000 vehicle miles per month;
- Vehicles should be available for public transportation service on a daily basis;
- Vehicle trips for contract, charter or subscription service should recover fully allocated costs;
- The system should aim to recover a minimum of 20 percent of its public transportation costs as a goal from farebox revenues generated through regular public transportation operations, with a minimum of ten percent farebox recovery required. The total of all purchase of service agreements should recover the fully allocated operating costs.

Additionally, GDOT recommends that service should be funded to the maximum extent possible by the generation of revenues through farebox.

Section 5311 can be used for capital and operational costs. Local funding for capital acquisition will at a minimum be ten percent of the costs. Capital expenses under Section 5311 can include:

1. Vehicles,
2. Communication equipment,
3. Wheelchair lifts,
4. Equipment installation costs,
5. Computer equipment and purchase of software (laptops are not an eligible expense and monthly software maintenance or lease fees are an operating expense), or
6. Office equipment,
7. Smart Card Reader,
8. Fareboxes.

Ten percent of the public transportation operating costs must be provided from fare or other local dollars. The remaining 90 percent of the operating cost is considered the net operating deficit.

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Federal funding may be provided for up to 50 percent of the net operating deficit; the remaining 50 percent (or more) must be provided from local funds. Operating costs include, but are not limited to, driver, mechanic, and dispatcher salaries, licenses, vehicle insurance, drug and alcohol testing, uniforms, maintenance and repairs (includes oil, tire and parts) and fuel. Monthly service fees for cell phones and/or two way radio services are eligible operating expenses.

In the South Georgia region, all counties that have a rural transit system contract with a third party operator. Third party operators are experienced transit providers that are able to provide transit service effectively and efficiently. These counties use the Section 5311 funds to purchase capital equipment and contract with the third party operator for operation of the system. According to MIDS, Inc., the most utilized third party operator in the South Georgia region, local governments generally only pay for vehicle insurance in operational expenses. All other operational expenses are handled by the third party operator. The third party operator attempts to provide service efficiently in order to profit from the farebox revenues.

According to MIDS, Inc. farebox costs generally are \$3 for trips that are less than ten miles, \$5 for trips that are at least ten miles, and \$0.50 for every mile outside of the county of service.

According to the *Georgia Administrative Guide for Rural Public Transportation Programs* (January 2007- June 2008 funding cycle), the following types of service are appropriate for rural public transportation programs:

- Demand-response or route deviation service. Demand-response is a type of service where individual passengers can request door-to-door or curb-to-curb transportation from a specific location to another specific location at a certain time. Route deviation service operates along a public way on a fixed-route, but which may deviate from the route occasionally in response to take a passenger to a destination or pick one up from an origin, after which it returns to the regular route.
- Contract and subscription service. Subscription service is a type of demand response service in which routes and schedules are pre-arranged to meet the travel needs of riders who sign up for the service in advance. Often these riders are clients of human service agencies, who contract with the transportation operator to provide the service on behalf of the agency. This type of service may be provided by a Section 5311 program only to the extent that it does not violate FTA Charter Bus restrictions.

BROOKS COUNTY OVERVIEW and ANALYSIS

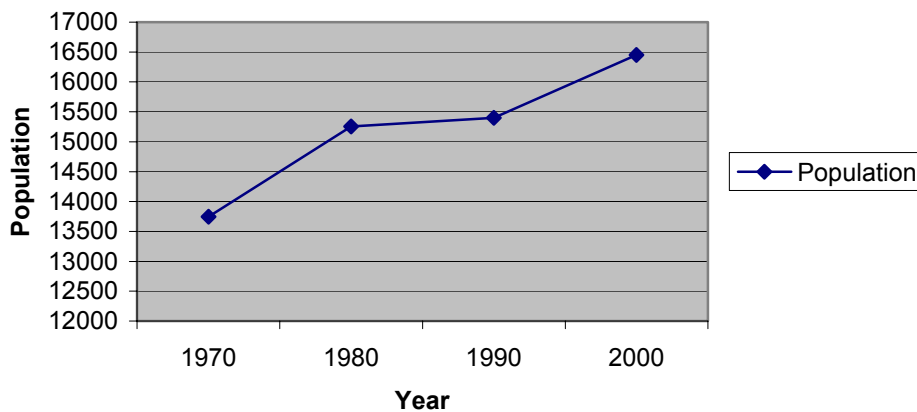
Brooks County was created in December 1858 from parts of Thomas and Lowndes Counties. It was named for states' rights legislator, Preston Brooks. The location for the county seat, Quitman, was selected in 1860 as this was the site of the connection with the Atlantic & Gulf Railroad, from Thomasville to Savannah. The residents and leaders of the area wasted no time and contracted with an English transplant architect, to become renowned John Wind, to plan their courthouse. He also did the work on a similar redbrick courthouse for Thomasville. Today the two courthouses do not look as comparable as they did at construction. In 1885, Thomas County remodeled their courthouse adding the then popular Italian Renaissance details. In 1892, Brooks County remodeled, but went in a different direction, more like that of Asher Benjamin's original 1827 "Elevation of a Courthouse." Both the counties have painted their courthouses and no longer is the redbrick evident.

Brooks County is south-central Georgia and is bound on the east by Lowndes County, on the west by Thomas County; the two counties which formed it. To the northeast is Cook County and the northwest is Colquitt County. To the southeast is Madison County and to the southwest is Jefferson County; both of which are in Florida.

Population

In 1970 Brooks County had a population of 13,743. Between 1970 and 2000 Brooks County increased by 2,707 which represents an increase of 19.7 percent over thirty years, to a population of 16,450 people. Figure 1 represents this growth pattern visually.

FIGURE 1 HISTORIC POPULATION TRENDS



This growth is in marked contrast to some of the other rural counties in South Georgia and nationally. The U. S. Census Bureau reported that rural counties in the 1980s suffered a net loss of 1.4 million. Brooks County managed not to lose population then. The Census Bureau goes to report that rural counties had a net influx of more than 1.6 million people from 1990 to 1995, and it looks like Brooks County did participate in this national trend.

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Information from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 Census was used to create a projection of the growth of population in Brooks County. It is assumed that the rate of change from 1970 to 2000 will continue on into 2030. Therefore, it must be remembered when looking at the projections of the upcoming tables that no real world current influences can be forecast; just past trends can be considered.

Table 1
Historical Growth Rate
Brooks County & Adjacent Counties in GA, 1980-2000

County	Population			Growth Percentage	
	1980	1990	2000	1980-1990	1990-2000
Brooks	15,255	15,398	16,450	0.9%	6.8%
Cook	13,490	13,456	15,771	-0.3%	17.2%
Lowndes	67,972	75,981	92,115	11.8%	21.2%
Thomas	38,098	38,943	42,737	2.2%	9.7%
Colquitt	35,376	36,645	42,053	3.6%	14.8%

Source: www.dca.state.ga.us/CountySnapshotsNet/countyshots, 2007

Table 1 was developed to focus in on the growth rate of Brooks County and the adjacent counties in Georgia. Cook County actually lost residents in the 80s, but it more than made up for it in the 90s, with a growth rate of over 17 percent. Brooks is part of the not long ago designated Valdosta Metropolitan Statistical Area. It is assumed that the growth of Valdosta/Lowndes County will also impact Brooks County. As can be seen, Brooks County's growth rate at 6.8 percent from 1990 to 2000, is slower than that of its adjacent states in Georgia. Since Brooks County is on the Florida-Georgia border, it was decided to include the neighbors to the south in a more current population growth study. See Table 3.

Table 2
Ten Year Growth and Projections:
Brooks County and Georgia

Year	Brooks County	State of Georgia
1980-1990	0.94%	18.7%
1990-2000	6.83	23.37
2000-2010	2.86	21.2
2010-2020	3.85	22.48
2020-2030	3.84	22.48

Source: U.S. Census 1980, 1990, 2000 and the South Georgia Regional Development Center, 2006

Table 2 shows Brooks County's growth and projections in comparison with the State of Georgia. The fact that it has a much slower rate of growth is to be expected. Georgia is one of the fastest growing states in the country, however much of that rapid growth is not in our region, but in the Greater Atlanta area, the coastal areas, and the mountains.

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Table 3
Population Estimates
Counties Surrounding Brooks, 2000-2006

County, ST	2000	2006 (estimate)	Percentage Change
Brooks, GA	16,450	16,464	0.1%
Cook, GA	15,771	16,333	3.6%
Lowndes, GA	92,115	97,844	6.2%
Thomas, GA	42,737	45,135	5.6%
Colquitt, GA	42,053	44,821	6.6%
Madison, FL	18,733	19,210	2.5%
Jefferson, FL	12,902	14,677	13.8%

Source: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states, 2007>

Table 3 is a comparison of all the counties that surround Brooks County, from 2000 to the estimated population as of April 2006. The population growth rate for Brooks County slowed to a barely perceptible crawl from 2000 to 2006, to only 14 more people. Cook County slowed down considerably also, to a growth rate of only 3.6 percent. This is rather surprising, since Cook County is located on Interstate 75 and it is immediately south of Tifton. The Tifton Gazette reported in April 2007, that a study done by the *Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development at the Georgia Institute of Technology* indicated that Tifton is predicted to be an emerging Mega Region for the Piedmont Atlanta Mega Region. It is one of only seven cities highlighted and the only one classified as rural. The other cities were: Charlotte, Charleston, Birmingham, Atlanta, Jacksonville, and Chattanooga.

Table 4
Brooks County
Natural Increase and Net Migration

Period	Natural Increase	Net Migration	Net Population Change
1970-79	869	643	1,512
1980-89	695	-452	243
1990-99	248	516	764

Source: 2010 Greater Brooks County Comprehensive Plan and the OASIS Database: <http://oasis.state.ga.us/>

Table 4 brings into sharper focus the source from which the county gained or lost people. This historical data concerns the Natural Increase (births minus deaths) and Net Migration (people moving in minus people moving out) of Brooks County. Natural Increase in Brooks County is not that of increase, but shows a trend of declining population. Net Migration has shown an unusual movement as it was 643 in the 70s, lost 452 people in the 80s, and gained 516 in the 90s. The negative Net Migration in the 80s caused Brooks County's population growth to slow down greatly in then, but it picked back up in the 90s. However, Natural Increase continued downward in the 90s. It is expected that most of the county's future growth will be in Net Migration.

Other reasons for lower population growth figures could possibly be attributed to the high cost of commuting and the struggling educational system of Brooks County. These two factors for consideration will be discussed in greater detail later.

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Calculating the rural/urban percentages for Brooks County creates a challenge as part of Barwick and Pavo are in Thomas County. One cannot merely subtract the city populations from the county population. However, roughly 63 percent of the Greater Brooks County (including the Thomas County sides of Barwick and Pavo) is unincorporated. *The Georgia County Guide, 2006*, 70.3 percent of Brooks County was considered “rural” in 2000. Rural is defined as all territory, population and housing not within an urbanized area and not in places of more than 2,500 people outside of an urbanized area. As a result, while Barwick, Pavo, Barney, Morven and Dixie are small towns, the population living in those environs would still be considered rural. An urbanized area consists of a central place or places and adjacent territory with a general population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land area that together have a minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people. Although having stated that over 70 percent of Brooks County is considered rural; it seems an oxymoron, as it is also considered in a part of the Valdosta/Lowndes Metropolitan Statistical Area, MSA, along with Echols and Lanier Counties.

Table 5
Greater Brooks County
Unincorporated Area Projections

Year	Population
2005	10,461
2010	10,660
2015	10,863
2020	11,070
2025	11,281
2030	11,496

Source: U. S. Census 1980, 1990, 2000 and the South Georgia Regional Development Center 2006

Table 5 shows the expected growth for the unincorporated areas of Greater Brooks County, assuming that the incorporated/unincorporated percentages will remain the same. However, these census projections aside, it seems that in other counties around Brooks, the unincorporated areas growth is outstripping that of the established towns. With the cost of services to the county, it would be wise to encourage growth near the town nodes. Also, there is a resurgence of popularity for living within a walkable community. This might bode well from communities such as Quitman.

Table 6
Quitman Population Projections

Year	Quitman
2005	4,624
2010	4,611
2015	4,609
2020	4,608
2025	4,608
2030	4,607

Source: U.S. Census 1980, 1990 and 2000, The Georgia Department of Community Affairs: <http://www.georgiaplanning.com/dataviews/census2/> (2006) and the South Georgia Regional Development Center 2006.

It is very difficult to predict the growth of Quitman since it has shown irregular patterns of growth and loss over the past several decades. Census data has shown losses of people, in Quitman, twice in since the 1960 Census. However, the population has tended to remain less than

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5,000 people since the 60s. Since the rate of change is not expected to remain constant, the rate of change for Quitman's population would decrease every ten years, if it conformed to the patterns established by the population projections based off of 1980, 1990 and 2000 Census data in Table 5. However, Net Migration and new subdivisions close in to Quitman could easily change these projections. Quitman would probably be the best area, in Brooks County, in terms of infrastructure and existing amenities to experience growth which outstrips projections.

Table 7
Growth Trend Projections:
Brooks County, Morven, Pavo, and Barwick

Year	Brooks County	Morven	Pavo*	Barwick*
2005	16,605	679	686	436
2010	16,921	731	660	444
2015	17,243	787	635	452
2020	17,572	848	611	461
2025	17,906	913	587	470
2030	18,247	983	565	478

Source: U. S. Census 1980, 1990, 2000 and the South Georgia Regional Development Center 2006
These numbers include the parts of Pavo or Barwick that are within Thomas County, GA.

Under this scenario of using the past to forecast the future, Table 7 shows the projected growth of Brooks County and the communities of Morven, Pavo and Barwick using exponential regression analysis of the data from the 1980, 1990 and 2000, U.S. Census. One may notice that Morven appears to be growing relatively fast, but Pavo seems to be continuously declining. While the Town of Pavo itself may not be growing, the rural area around Pavo, especially in Thomas County is rapidly changing and former fields are sprouting 'ranchettes.' Morven's growth may be in part due to the rise of migrant workers in the community.

Age Distribution

The most apparent trends in Brooks County involve the loss of people from ages birth to 24 and the rapid gains of people 35 to 54 years old. The cities generally mirror the trend of the county. Table 8 shows the historical age distribution of Brooks County and the percentage of the age groups within the decade and the change from 1980 to 2000, with age groups. Figure 3 shows the projected age distributions for people 18 to 24, 35 to 54 and 65 and older.

Table 8
Brooks County
Age Distribution and Percentage Change over Time

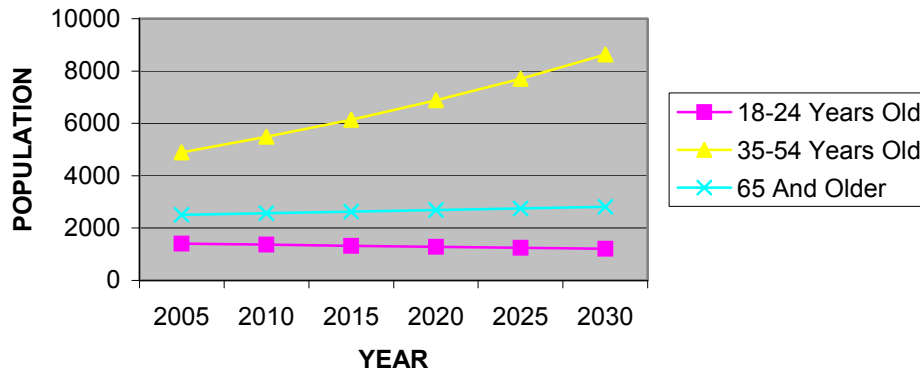
Age Category in Years	1980	% in 1980	1990	% in 1990	2000	% in 2000	Change from 1980 to 2000
0-4	1,272	8.34%	1,286	8.35%	1,076	6.54%	-15.41%
5-13	2,622	17.19%	2,545	16.53%	2,537	15.42%	-3.24%
14-17	1,258	8.25%	761	4.94%	812	4.94%	-35.45%
18-20	758	4.97%	715	4.64%	690	4.19%	-8.97%
21-24	888	5.82%	819	5.32%	767	4.66%	-13.63%
25-34	1,924	12.61%	2,218	14.40%	2,075	12.61%	7.85%
35-44	1,428	9.36%	1,937	12.58%	2,353	14.30%	64.78%
45-54	1,397	9.16%	1,430	9.29%	2,093	12.72%	49.82%
55-64	1,453	9.52%	1,355	8.80%	1,582	9.62%	8.88%
65 +	2,255	14.78%	2,332	15.14%	2,465	14.98%	9.31%
TOTAL	15,255	100.00%	15,398	100.00%	16,450	100.00%	

Source: 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and SGRDC, 2007

Table 8 examines the Brooks County population growth over the last twenty years in terms of age groups. It is important to recognize if there are trends in changing demographics within the population; not just in terms of net gain or net loss. This can help leaders anticipate needs ranging from new elementary schools to personal care homes for the increasingly aging population. There are some interesting changes of the numbers in age groups that bear closer scrutiny. The last column, compares the numbers in the age categories over the last twenty years and comes up with a percentage of change. One of the first facts noticed is that in the first five age categories, 0-4, 5-13, 14-17, 18-20, and 21-24; all have suffered a loss in population. Just looking at the school age populace, ages 5-17, there was a decrease of 523 kids or over 20 classrooms of students and the associated jobs. From 1980 to 2000, this equated to a decrease of over 38 percent.

Then, there is a marked change. The same population group of 5-17 year olds in 1980, then aged twenty years and in 2000, the 25 to 44 year old age group grew a whopping 72 percent. This is followed by a huge upsurge in the 45 to 54 year olds of almost 50 percent. This ‘older’ population is also being supplemented by Net Migration. The growth of this group is also confirms what is antidotally reported to be occurring in much of South Georgia. The majority of this growth is purportedly coming up from Florida. There are many who are becoming disenchanted with the escalating hurricane activity, the inability to evacuate swiftly, the increasing property taxes, the congestion, and the rising cost of living. There are so many of these people, like Baby Boomers, they have had their own nametag coined; “half-backs.” This moniker stems from the fact that they are returning half of the way back from whence they originally came. These are not your “Sun City” retirees, but a younger, active population who are seeking a place to retire one day, but are meanwhile working. This older, experienced labor force could be a boon to Brooks County in attracting businesses and industries.

FIGURE 3 BROOKS PROJECTED AGE DISTRIBUTION



Source: Projections based off of 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census data by the South Georgia Regional Development Center

Figure 3 represents graphically the projected adult age groups from 2005 through 2030. It bears reiteration that these projections are based on past trends and not taking into account any current events. The percentage of people 65 and older in Brooks County has remained about 15 percent over time. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that this population is a very stable population and is merely increasing naturally due to the general increase of the population. However, it is unknown why there is a consistent decrease in the young adult population or such a strong increase in the 35 to 54 year old population. The decrease of young adults may be due to them leaving the County to look for expanded opportunities outside of Brooks County, such as employment or continuing education.

Workplace Destinations

Patterns of work in rural areas seem to be changing more rapidly that those in urban areas. The following tables will examine where Brooks County residents work and their commuting behavior.

**Table 9
Brooks County Labor Force
Place of Work**

Category	1990	2000
Total population	15,398	16,450
Worked in State of residence	5,886	6,594
Worked in county of residence	3,511	3,284
Worked outside of county of residence	2,375	3,310
Worked outside of state of residence	146	173

Source: The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/dataviews/census2/>) 2007

Table 9 examines the labor force and where they work. In 2000, only 48.5 percent of employed citizens of Brooks County actually worked in their county of residence. From 1990 to 2000, more and more people, almost a thousand, found work outside of Brooks and fewer worked in

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Brooks County. A large portion of this change comes from the fact that Lowndes County and other surrounding counties have expanding needs for employees and often pay a higher wage. As more residents leave the county for work, so do they shop and recreate elsewhere. This means that the bulk of the costs of community services is less and less being offset by business and industry revenue taxes, thereby making it harder and harder to municipalities to adequately fund their budget. In addition, studies have shown that the less frequently a parent of guardian is in the school, the less well students do academically. Furthermore, if residents are forced to work outside of the county, the less involved they can be civically and socially, thereby weakening the fabric of the community.

Table 10
Commuting Comparison by Percentage
State and SGRDC Region, 1970 - 2000

Location	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Increase Since 1970
Georgia	25.3	29.7	37.9	41.5	16.2
Ben Hill	9.4	9.2	14.2	21.4	12.0
Brooks	18.8	31.6	40.8	51.5	32.7
Cook	17.0	22.7	32.4	40.2	23.2
Echols	45.7	57.4	83.5	85.0	39.3
Irwin	21.9	34.6	47.6	56.6	34.7
Lanier	43.1	45.2	50.7	65.3	22.2
Lowndes	4.4	7.1	9.1	8.6	4.2
Tift	5.5	6.3	10.6	15.5	10.0
Turner	11.4	12.2	32.0	38.3	26.9

Source: US Bureau of the Census 1970-2000

Since more than half of Brooks County residents work outside of the county, it seemed prudent to examine commute times. Table 10 looks at the percentage of the population that has commuted from 1970 through 2000, for Brooks County, the State of Georgia, and the other counties in the South Georgia RDC. As can be seen, all groups, except for Lowndes County 1990 to 2000, have seen the percentage of commuters growing in the last thirty years. The average mean travel time to work for residents of Brooks County is almost 25 minutes (*The Georgia Guide to Counties, 2006*). This is consistent with the national average of 24.4 minutes. But, approximately two-thirds of the states have shorter commute-to-work times than the national average.

Map 1 looks at the Georgia Department of Transportation Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts (AADTC) for Brooks County. It should come as no surprise that the three highest AADTC are on U.S. Highway 84, in downtown Quitman. (Please refer to the insert for an enlargement of Quitman). They are 15,620, 13,630, and 12,090 – one way counts – heading from west to east. Then further east, still on U.S. Highway 84 is the fourth highest traffic count at 10,330. Then, right at the Lowndes County line, on State Highway 133 the AADTC is 9,050. Perhaps in looking at these traffic patterns it would be possible to encourage carpooling to work. The Brooks County Chamber of Commerce has a nice website, perhaps they could include a

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commuters' bulletin board. A patrolled Park N' Ride would also encourage carpooling. The 5311 program is not geared toward meeting the needs of thousands of commuters, but meeting other transportation needs.

Economic Characteristics

One of the first items of consideration is the true economic cost of commuting, since over half of the labor force of Brooks County commutes. Most drivers do not calculate this, but merely look at the price of gasoline at the pump. Other costs include; operation and maintenance, tires, ownership costs of depreciation, taxes, and finance charges, there is also increased insurance costs of long commutes, and annual licenses and fees. It makes a valid position to consider accepting a lower paying job in Brooks County, rather than driving. The average drive is almost 25 minutes, so if one then assumed that was approximately 20 miles, twice a day, 5 days a week for 50 weeks of the year; that would be 10,000 miles just for travel to work and no side trips for errands included.

The University of South Florida, using AAA figures*, came up with a composite figure for the cost per mile of 68.2 cents, in 2005. This figure was calculated using 2005 car prices, mile per gallon, and only \$1.939 per gallon of regular gasoline. Therefore, low balling it with 2005 figures for cars, not trucks, it came out to an average, before taxes, annual cost of commuting of \$6,820 for the over 50 percent of the labor force. *(Source: www.nctr.usf.edu/clearhinghamhouse/costtodrive.htm)

The average annual wage for residents of Brooks County (from Table 13, in 2004) was \$23,140. Adding an increase for the next year of 3.38 percent, which was the State of Georgia increase from the previous year, compared to the Brooks County increase of only 1.69 percent, brings one to an adjusted annual wage in 2005 of \$23,922. (IF one were to include in the calculations that an extra 5 hours was added to the work week by the commuting without pay, taking that average wage of \$11.50 per hour, 5 hours a week, for 50 weeks, they are 'donating' an unpaid for amount of \$2,875 each year for the time they sit in their car, but this is not included except for informational purposes). However, using the \$23,922 wage, minus 33 percent for taxes, brings down the net take home pay to \$16,028. From that, subtracting the \$6,820 cost of commuting, would equal a break-even of \$9,208 to stay in Brooks County and not commute; that is of course assuming there was an alternative and the jobs were there. Again, this is not taking into account the increases in car prices and gasoline, up about a dollar a gallon, in the last two years. Perhaps these figures could be an inducement for clean new businesses or industries to move to Brooks County knowing that there is a working labor force that should be able to be swayed, if educated to the true economic cost of commuting and how much net they, on average, actually bring home, **\$9,208**, to begin paying all their other expenses.

Historically Greater Brooks County's economy was based on its agriculture. While agriculture is still a very important part of Brooks County's economy, over time Brooks County has seen the growth of industry and services as important economic contributors.

Brooks County Rural Transit Plan

Table 11
Brooks County
Employment History by Sector Percentages
1980 -2000

Type of Industry	1980	1990	2000
Ag, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining	16.1%	13.1%	6.3%
Construction	6.5%	5.2%	8.0%
Manufacturing	22.3%	24.5%	18.3%
Wholesale Trade	3.9%	3.8%	5.2%
Retail Trade	14.5%	15.8%	12.8%
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	5.2%	5.6%	4.4%
Information	NA	NA	1.4%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	2.7%	3.2%	3.0%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management	2.7%	3.5%	3.6%
Educational, health and social services	15.0%	14.4%	20.6%
Arts, Entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	5.3%	0.9%	6.2%
Other Services	2.2%	5.3%	4.2%
Public Administration	3.6%	4.6%	6.0%

Source: The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/dataviews/census2/>) 2006

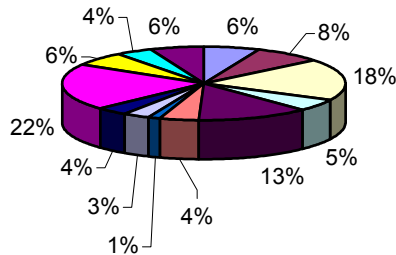
The Georgia Department of Community Affairs deems there are 13 primary sectors that make up the economy of a region. Table 11 shows the percentages for each of these sectors for Brooks County in the years 1980, 1990, 2000. Despite the fact that Brooks County is a predominantly rural, workers are relying less and less on Agriculture Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining, which used to be a major employer at over 16 percent of the workforce, however it has fallen rapidly in 20 years to comprise just over 6 percent. Manufacturing is still a strong local segment of employment albeit having dropped from 22.3 percent in 1980 to 18.3 percent in 2000, it is still the second major sector of employment. Although, with more and more manufacturing leaving this county, that figure is expected to shrink. Microcraft, Inc. is the largest manufacturing employer, with 380 employees, is reported to be closing, and is followed by Weeks Textile Co., with 256 employees, Quitman Manufacturing, 195 employees, Beech Island Knitting Company with 120 employees, and Langboard, Inc., with 111 employees. (Source: Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism, 2001)

Educational, health, and social services is now the largest sector, having grown from 15 percent in 1980 to almost 21 percent in 2000. The largest employer in 2007 is the Brooks County School System with 450 employees, followed by Quitman Presbyterian Home with between 250 and 300 employees. The source for the figures for 2007 came directly from the employers.

It must be noted that percentage of people involved in Retail Trade has slipped in the past decade. This is an expected inverse correlation as the percentage of the population that commutes out of the county rises. Studies have shown that employees tend to bank, buy cars, shop, fill up with gas, and run other errands near where they work. Therefore, there is less demand for these services at home.

Brooks County Rural Transit Plan

**FIGURE 4 GREATER BROOKS EMPLOYMENT
BY SECTOR**



- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Transportation, warehousing, and utilities
- Information
- Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate
- Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services
- Educational, health and social services
- Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services
- Other Services
- Public Administration

Source: The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/dataviews/census2/>) 2006

Figure 4 represents the Employment by Sector for the year 2000, depicted by a pie chart. The greatest percentage is in Educational, Health and Social Services at 20.6 percent. The second largest is in manufacturing at 18.3 percent. Retail Trade and Construction follow at 12.8 and 8.0 percent respectively.

**Table 12
Brooks County
Employment Changes by Sector, in Numbers of Individuals
2000 to 2005**

Sector	Employment, 2000	Employment, 2005	Employment Change	Percent Growth, 2000 - 2005
Education and Health Services	660	743	83	12.6
Manufacturing	767	490	-277	-36.1
Natural Resources and Mining	461	436	-25	-5.4
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	505	391	-114	-22.6
Public Administration	20	235	215	1,075.0
Financial Activities	114	147	33	28.9
Leisure and Hospitality	132	135	3	2.3
Construction	145	133	-12	-8.3

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Sector	Employment, 2000	Employment, 2005	Employment Change	Percent Growth, 2000 - 2005
Professional and Business Services	.	61	.	.
Information	.	0	.	.
Other Services	90	0	-90	-100.0
TOTAL CLASSIFIED	2,894	2,771	-184	

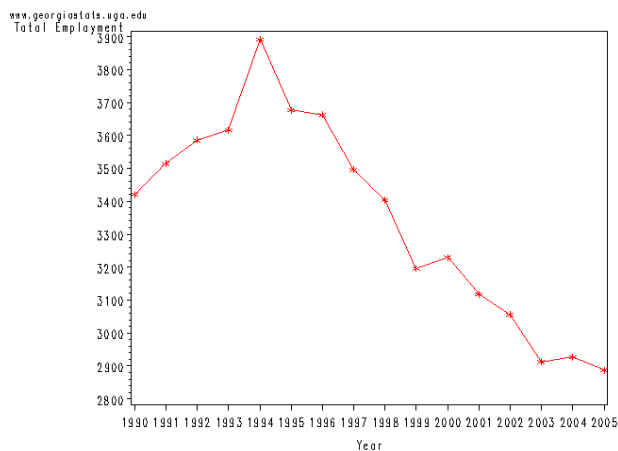
Source: www.georgiastats.uga.edu

Table 12 presents the employment changes from 2000 to 2005, in Brooks County. It must be noted that this table is slightly different from the previous DCA table, so a direct comparison is not possible. The industries are ordered according to how many people they employed in 2005. The Education and Health Services sector employed the most workers, so it is first, followed by Manufacturing, and the Natural Resources and Mining sector is third. This area had 2,887 employees in 2005, in all industries including some jobs that Bureau of Labor Statistics could not classify into the 11 sectors listed in Table 11.

During the period 2000 to 2005, employment in your area declined by 184 jobs. In terms of employment growth, the most important industry was Public Administration (215 jobs). It is followed by Education and Health Services (83 jobs), and Financial Activities (33 jobs). Do these employment changes agree with your recollections of this time period? Did a new employer move into your area? Did an old employer layoff workers or go out of business?

Within a single sector it is possible to observe both of these effects simultaneously. For example, a new large retailer such as Walmart can hire 100 workers or more, but these gains may come at the expense of retail jobs at smaller shops. The net gain in employment can be either positive or negative. These effects can be felt more acutely in the rural counties of Georgia.

**Figure 5
Brooks County
Employment Trend
1990-2005**



Brooks County Rural Transit Plan

Figure 5 graphically represents the employment trends for the county, from 1990 through 2005. Needless to say, this is not the desired direction. New forms of employment must be sought utilizing the strengths of Brooks County.

TABLE 13
Unemployment Status
Annual Averages for 2004

Area	Unemployment Rate
Brooks County	2.5 %
South Georgia Region	3.3 %
State of Georgia	4.3 %

Source: Georgia Department of Labor: (<http://www.dol.state.ga.us/pdf/pr/clab1004.pdf>) 2006

Brooks County had an estimated labor force of 7,838 in 2004. The labor force includes all people who are able to work. In 2004, an estimated average of 7,641 were employed leaving only 332 unemployed. This number gives Brooks County an unemployment rate of only 2.5 percent. Table 13 shows Brooks County's unemployment rate in comparison with the State of Georgia and the South Georgia Region. The South Georgia Region includes; Brooks, Lowndes, Echols, Lanier, Cook, Tift, Ben Hill, Irwin, and Turner Counties. In comparison to the rest of the South Georgia Region and the State of Georgia, Brooks County has the lowest unemployment rate. This does not necessarily equate to not having an adequate labor force though as many workers who are commuting might easily be induced to work in the county if the opportunity were presented.

Table 14
Brooks County and Georgia
Average Annual Wage

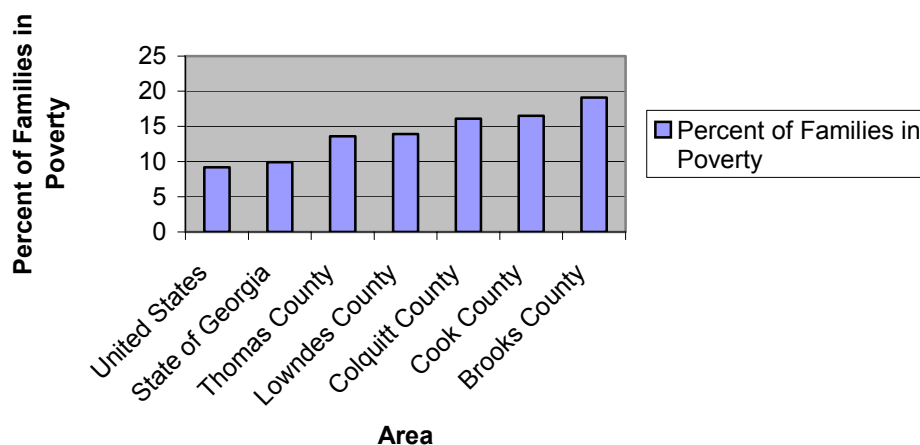
Year	Brooks Average Annual Wage	Brooks Average Annual Wage in 2004 Dollars	Georgia Average Annual Wage	Georgia Average Annual Wage in 2004 Dollars
2001	\$20,084	\$21,430	\$35,136	\$37,490
2002	\$21,994	\$23,094	\$35,734	\$37,521
2003	\$22,157	\$22,755	\$36,626	\$37,615
2004	\$23,140	\$23,140	\$37,866	\$37,866

Source: U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics 2006: <http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/outside.jsp?survey=en>

The average annual wage in Brooks County has increased by 15.2 percent from 2001 and 2004, but when adjusted to inflation the real increase is only seven percent. Georgia's average annual wage increase from 2001 to 2004 was only 7.8 percent. However, despite the fact that Brooks County's has grown more rapidly than Georgia's, it was still lagged 39 percent less than average wage in the state in 2004. For the 2004/2005 school year, the average teacher's salary was \$41,383; which looks really good compared to the average wage of \$23,140 in Brooks County. However, of the 159 counties in Georgia, Brooks County teachers' salaries rank close to the very bottom at 151. (Source: *The Georgia County Guide, 2006*)

Figure 6

FIGURE 5 1999 PERCENT OF FAMILIES IN POVERTY



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006

The lower wages for Brooks County residents contributes to the higher poverty rate. In fact, when looking at how much money from the family budget is taken out in the cost of commuting, the true poverty level is much greater than reported. As is depicted in Figure 6, in Brooks County, 19.1 percent of families were in poverty in the year 1999. This is higher than the percentage for the United States, the State of Georgia, and the surrounding Georgia counties including Colquitt, Cook, Thomas and Lowndes. In fact, Brooks County’s poverty level in 1999 was over twice that of the national poverty level. In Brooks County, 27.6 percent of families with children under 18 are in poverty and 33.3 percent of families with children under five years of age live in poverty. Brooks County is a county with high levels of poverty where many children, especially the younger children, are vulnerable to conditions of poverty.

Table 15
Brooks County and Georgia
Measure of School Success in Percentages

Benchmarks for Success in School	2004		2005	
	Brooks	GA	Brooks	GA
Absent more than 15 days	14%	12%	15%	11%
3 rd grade, meeting or exceeding std. for reading	90%	90%	90%	92%
5 th grade, meeting or exceeding std. of reading	79%	85%	88%	89%
5 th grade, meeting or exceeding std. of math	85%	83%	88%	87%
8 th grade, meeting or exceeding std. of reading	87%	85%	73%	83%
8 th grade, meeting or exceeding std. of math	65%	73%	52%	69%
Students graduating from high school on time	52%	65%	55%	69%
High school graduates eligible for HOPE scholarship	36%	62%	34%	61%
Students eligible to receive free or reduced meals	75%	46%	76%	48%

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kid Count, 2007 Fact Book, aecf.org

One of the best ways for individuals to get out of poverty, and improve the entire community, is through education. It is through an educated work force that new jobs will come into an area.

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And, if the educational system is struggling, there is reluctance for young people to stay or relocate to an area. It appears as though the education through the elementary grades is right on track and was even better in 2005, than in 2004. Brooks County can be very proud of this. However, it also looks as if there are problems beginning in the middle grades and are worsening as students approach graduation, or dropping out. Georgia has one of the lowest education rankings in the nation and Brooks County is below average in the state. It is imperative that to break the cycle of poverty and provide a good quality of life for all residents, we must not fail our students.

ECONOMIC IMPACT SUGGESTION

Just as financial advisors recommend monetary diversification, so should Brooks County look at economic diversification. What are the assets of Brooks County? One of the strongest is the natural beauty of the land and the town of Quitman and the Courthouse. Agriculture and Tourism are two of the top of the industries in Georgia. Brooks County is in a prime position to capitalize upon them. Below is a table with the top ten commodities in the state and then other top ranking commodities which should be of interest to Brooks County.

Table 16
Georgia Agricultural Commodity Rankings, 2006

Rank	Commodity	Farm Gate Value \$	% of GATotal
1	Broilers	\$3,789,684,448	36.56%
2	Cotton	\$745,462,412	7.19%
3	Timber	\$585,115,924	5.64%
4	Beef	\$455,713,606	4.40%
5	Eggs	\$447,985,861	4.32%
6	Horses	\$416,478,500	4.02%
7	Peanuts	\$321,334,435	3.10%
8	Greenhouse	\$274,930,734	2.65%
9	Dairy	\$233,579,378	2.25%
10	Container Nursery	\$210,439,841	2.03%
13	Pecans	\$143,243,088	1.38%
17	Hunting Leases - Deer	\$108,199,376	1.04%
31	Nature-based Tourism	\$50,820,985	0.49%
38	Ag-based Tourism	\$27,140,990	0.26%
41	Quail	\$23,013,660	0.22%
51	Hunting Leases - Turkey	\$6,037,424	0.058%
57	Hunting Leases - Duck	\$2,203,650	0.021%
	Total Farm Gate Value	\$10,366,342,023	100%

The 2006 top commodities were the same as 2005 with peanuts moving behind eggs and horse in the ranking, representing the only change in Georgia's top ten enterprises, ranked by production value. Table 16 arrays the top ten commodities and then the others are those that would also pertain to Brooks County's natural assets.

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Look at the bold faced items; Horses, Nature-based Tourism, and Ag-based Tourism. The Farm Gate Value of Horses has gone up from \$70,837,700 in 1999 to \$416,468,500 in 2006. That is 488 percent! Nature-based Tourism and Ag-based Tourism were not even considered until 2002. Hunting Leases of land are considered separately and are big business. These are areas where Brooks could excel.

Brooks County is ranked number 12 in the state for Farm Gate Value 2006, for Horses – boarding, training, and breeding. Brooks County is ranked number 16 in the state for Farm Gate Value of Horses raised. You have a terrific base of support and local knowledge.

Farm Gate Value does not include economic impact or ripple effect. Conservative estimates for each horse living in locale average the economic impact of \$3,500 per horse.

The suggestion is that Brooks County diversify based on its natural strengths. The back portion of the new Industrial Park could be parking rigs and there could be paddocks. Both could be rented daily. This would provide easy access to the wonderful and often historic dirt roads of Brooks County. There could be a map system or even local and knowledgeable guides to tell the history of the region and guide them through the area. These guests would shop at the stores, eat in the restaurants, and fill up with gas. This target market is more affluent and better educated than most tourists.

The longleaf pine ecosystem is one of the most diverse in the world and the most diverse in North America. Birdwatching and wildflower identification are a large part of this nature-based tourism. People from around the world come to visit place like Greenwood Plantation, in Thomasville and the hunting lodges through the southwestern part of the state. Dixie Plantation is home to horse shows, quail hunting, field trials, and various sporting dog events. Lowndes County is building a new Equine Facility. It will be a large covered arena, seating 2,400, VIP boxes, and 194 stalls and room for spectator parking and horse trailers and trucks. All could use these facilities to and spread the word about the beauty of Brooks County.

The horse market is rapidly growing, especially among the baby-boomer market. Many have only limited access to places to ride. Trailering their horses to new and different places for vacations and week-ends is a major social outlet and use of their disposable income. Georgia has not done any studies, yet, on the economic impact for horses so the following is from Florida:

- The Florida horse industry produces goods and services valued at \$3.0 billion
- The national industry has a \$5.1 billion impact on the Florida economy when the multiplier effect of spending by industry suppliers and employees is taken into account. Accounting for off-site spending of spectators would result in an even higher figure.
- 440,000 Floridians are involved in the industry as horse owners, service providers, employees, and volunteers. Even more participate as spectators.
- The Florida horse industry directly provides 38,300 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs. Spending by suppliers and employees (in Florida and other states) generates additional jobs in Florida for a total employment impact of 104,700.
- There are 500,000 horses in Florida , over 60 percent of which are involved in showing and recreation.

Target marketing to the horse market has not yet been done in Georgia. Brooks County is well positioned for this; geographically, historically, and it is environmentally blessed with rolling

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hills, unspoiled dirt roads, and flowing creeks. In addition to the horse market, there could be a diverse trail use; off road biking, which is usually reserved for the northern part of the state could be enlightened about the opportunities available in Brooks County. Horses and bikes share the trails in many parts of the country.

The Federal Highway Administration, SAFETEA-LU section, has provided \$75 million in 2007 and an increasing \$5 million a year, for a recreational trails program. Please see source: (www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/factsheets/rectrails.htm). This program is unusual in that other Federal program funds for this purpose would be eligible for a match. Up to 95 percent may be a combination of U.S. DOT and other Federal agencies. For protection and designation these beautiful and historic dirt roads could see local canopy road status of Scenic Byway. It also would meet the program eligibility for the GDOT Transportation Enhancement Program, but this is a very competitive process.

5311 RURAL TRANSIT PROGRAM

The Data and Analysis section describes a county with a gradually growing population, a high percentage of commuters, a low wage, and a high rate of poverty. These traits support an argument for continued utilization of section 5311 funds and need for the Brooks transit system.

Performance Evaluation of Existing Services

Brooks County operates its newly formed rural transit system through a contract with a third party operator. Since the system's beginning in 2005, MIDS Inc. has operated the rural transit system. The transit system has only been in operation since 2005 and is composed of four shuttle buses owned by the county. It is a demand-response type system where there are no fixed routes. The county pays for the insurance on the vehicles. Contracting with a third party operator allows the county to have a rural transit system without hiring new staff. The county's only operational expense for the system is insurance payments. Other than the cost of insurance, Brooks County neither gains nor loses money from the transit system. Any profits or losses are absorbed by the third party operator.

Residents in the past have used the public transit system for trips not only within Brooks County but also to popular destination in Lowndes County, such as the mall. MIDS Inc. also operates any public transportation trips for Medicaid, senior citizens and the Department of Human Resources. Residents who are currently in Valdosta could use private taxi cabs services to return to Brooks County, but this option is not believed to be frequently used. Informal arrangements among friends is believed to be the leading mode of transportation for those few without their own private vehicle or those who are incapacitated and cannot drive.

Local governments can operate their own transit system without utilizing a third party operator, but counties in south-central Georgia tend to prefer operate their rural transit system through a third party operator. Third party operators are both efficient and experienced in providing such services and help ensure low costs to the tax payers and user of the transit system.

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As this plan was developed concurrently with the Greater Brooks County 2030 Comprehensive Plan, staff utilized discussion generated about rural transit in Brooks County during public meeting and steering committee meeting for the local joint comprehensive plan update to obtain qualitative data on the performance of existing transit services. Residents and officials who all gave comments on the Brooks Transit system unanimously agreed that the Brooks Transit system was beneficial to customers and to the community. However, some residents called into question the system's ability to adequately serve all potential customers. Based on these findings, it is recommended that:

1. Brooks County continues to utilize section 5311 funds to fund a transit system.
2. Brooks County continues to operate Brooks Count Transit through third party operators.
3. Brooks County collaborates more with third party operators in obtaining customers comments.

Cost Estimates

A rural transit system includes capital expenses and operating expenses. Table 10 shows the estimated expenses for several vehicles that would be included in capital expenses.

Capital equipment is eligible for funding under the Section 5311 grant program. The minimum required local funding for eligible capital equipment is 10 percent. However, this amount may be higher depending on the availability of state and federal funds.

Table 16
Capital Equipment Cost Estimates

Capital Equipment	2006	2007	2008
Standard Van	\$25,000	\$25,500	\$26,000
Conversion Van	\$38,500	\$39,000	\$39,000
Conversion Van w/ Lift	\$42,000	\$42,500	\$43,000
Shuttle Van	\$33,000	\$33,500	\$34,000
Shuttle Van w/ Lift	\$37,000	\$37,500	\$38,000
Shuttle Bus	\$37,000	\$38,000	\$38,000
Shuttle Bus w/ Lift	\$42,000	\$42,500	\$43,000
Mobile Radio	\$1,500	\$1,700	\$1,800
Computer, Printer and Software	\$3,000	\$3,200	\$3,300

For the five year period of this plan, Brooks County's current stock of capital equipment should suffice as long as they are maintained properly.

Counties that have developed a rural transportation program in the South Georgia region contract a third party operator. Many third party operators, such as MIDS Inc., provide services to the counties at no cost to the local governments. Operational expenses are paid for by fares received, and if necessary, the federal funds that are offered from up to 50 percent of the net operating

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deficit. Any other losses are paid for by the company, and any profits are gained by the third party operator.

Performance Evaluation and Existing Transit Service

MIDS Inc., the most frequently utilized third party operator in the South Georgia region, explains that the average operating cost per month per vehicle is \$3,500.

In order to offset these costs, third party operators attempt to provide a large amount of transportation services as efficiently as possible. Third party operators try to break even on operational costs, and try to profit if possible.

MIDS, Inc. has informed the SGRDC that Brooks County officials decided not to be a participant in the GDOT 5311 Program. This sounds like a wise decision on the part of leaders. And, MIDS, Inc. has elected to provide the service without the county being a participant. Table 16 looks over the data provided, unfortunately 2005 information is not complete

**Table 17
Brooks County
MIDS, Inc., Third Party Operator
Operational Information**

Description	2005	2006 Quantity or Cost
Public Trips (one way)	4,734	537
Purchase of Service Trips (DHR, Medicaid, DEFACS, Seniors, Mental Health Services, etc.)	15,091	15,713
Miles Driven		154,400
Hours		9,614
Income		\$105,552
Expenses		\$196,180
Average Cost per Trip		\$12.07
Average Cost per Hour		\$20.41
Average Miles Per Trip		9.5

Source: MIDS, Inc., Danny Saturday, Regional Supervisor, 229/247-1900, June 2007

If one were only to look at Table 17, it would appear that MIDS, Inc. is losing money. Fortunately for all, that is not the case. They are able to receive 50 percent reimburse of loss from GDOT, some additional payments from the Federal Government, they have no lease payments, and they receive lower gas prices. Brooks County only had to pay 5 percent of the upfront capital expenditure. This arrangement seems like a win/win/win situation. A win for MIDS, Inc., a win for Brooks County, and most importantly a win for the citizens that need this form of transportation. Mr. Saturday's phone number is included if there are any specific questions about the current MIDS, Inc. operation. He went on to explain the most of the counties

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in Southwest Georgia are not participants in the program, but MIDS, Inc. has elected to service these counties. Should this advantageous situation change, it would be wise to reinvestigate the possibilities of the 5311 program.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1

To make accessible to all citizens of Brooks County transportation service on a consistent basis within budgetary constraints.

Objective 1.1: Meet all current demand-response requests during hours of operation.

Objective 1.2: Ensure that vehicles are well-maintained and replaced as needed.

Objective 1.3: Yearly evaluate customer satisfaction.

Goal 2

To encourage all residents to utilize Brooks Transit as an alternate mode of transportation.

Objective 2.1: Increase awareness of Brooks Transit’s existence and benefit to the community and promote its use.

Goal 3

Ensure that transit planning is a continuous process.

Objective 3.1: Annually review the *Brooks Transit Development Plan* and make changes as necessary.

Brooks County Transit Development Plan Capital and Operating Plan State FY 08-13										
Objective	Strategy	State Fiscal Year						Estimated Cost	Responsible Party	Funding Source
		08	09	10	11	12	13			
Goal 1										
1.1: Meet all demand-response during hours of operation	1.1.1 To ensure efficient and effective transit system, continue to operate transit service through third party operator.	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$168,000 per year	Third Party Operator	Third Party Operator
	1.1.2: Annually contract or renew contract with a third party operator	X	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	Brooks County	General Fund

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1.2: Ensure that vehicles are well-maintained and replaced as needed.	1.2.1: Regularly maintain vehicles	X	X	X	X	X	X	Varies	Third Party Operator	Third Party Operator
	1.2.2: Replace vehicles every 100,000 miles (replace with three regular shuttle buses and one shuttle bus with lift)	X			X			\$157,000 for four vehicles	Brooks County	Brooks County General Fund, SPLOST, Section 5311 Grant
1.3: Yearly evaluate customer satisfaction	1.3.1: Require MIDS, Inc. keep a record of customer complaints and compliments and present them to the Board yearly.	X	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	Brooks County, Third Party Operator	General Fund, Third Party Operator
	1.3.2: Yearly have a public meeting to gain input on Brooks transit from the public	X	X	X	X	X	X	Staff time	Brooks County	General Fund
2.1: Increase awareness of Brooks Transit's existence and benefit to the community and promote its use.	2.1.1: Every half year purchase advertisements in local newspapers to advertise the importance of Brooks Transit and to encourage its use.	X	X	X	X	X	X	Varies	Brooks County	General Fund
3.1: Annually review the <i>Brooks Transit Development Plan</i> and make changes as necessary.	3.1.1: Annually the Board of Commissioners will review the <i>Brooks Transit Development Plan</i> and adopt any necessary changes	X	X	X	X	X	X	Staff Time	Brooks County	General Fund

10 year rate of change multiplier (1 is

IV. CONCLUSION

The current economic trend is not what any residents of Brooks County would desire. However, if one takes advantage of the natural opportunities the land has given over the years, now just in a different way, through horseback riding and ag-based and nature-based tourism there could be some new growth and vitality and jobs.

From reading of the Brooks County Rural Transit Study, and living there, it is obvious that the county will be changing. Therefore, vigilance must be taken to ensure that future growth is balanced and not all in residential growth. Residential growth (people) cost more in expenses and community services, such as fire protection, police, and schools, than property taxes can bring recoup in revenue. This means that there must be a balance of land uses; residential, farm and forest, and business and industry. Farm and forest lands do not cost as much to service as they bring in. Industrial and commercial properties are where communities receive the largest economic boost. However, you must have rooftops for commercial to follow. A link to an excellent and quick slide presentation from a UGA professor, from the Department Agriculture and Applied Economics, Dr. Jeff Dorfman, about regarding cost of community services, impact fees, and incentives can be found by typing the following in website address location: srdc.msstate.edu/smartgrowth/ppt/jeffreydorfman.ppt Accordingly, the solutions are what we have always known; all things in moderation. It is a balanced approach to land use that will promote long term prosperity and preserve the quality of life, now and for future generations.